

## By the Galactic Ommissiah! What do you mean... not your male progenitor?

OC OC

Zix is very confused. Xir best friend had just told xem something absurd. Mutually contradictory. No matter what way xey turn the options xey can imagine from their cultural understanding of the Terrans. The meaning xir translator keeps insisting is correct is utterly illogical. Maybe it is one of those human idiocies... or is it idioms? There are so many weird ways the mad monkeys communicate. That is even without their individual idiosyncrasies!

Misunderstanding might make xir friend angry at xem. Humans are even more sensitive about insult to their parental units than most of the rest of the galactic community is. So it is of paramount importance to be cautious and concise. Which xey fail at spectacularly anyway. Luckily, this human is pretty chill, so xey repeat, "By the galactic Ommissiah! What do you mean your male progenitor is not your male progenitor? Your species is more or less dimorphic. This is known. One male life giver and one female life giver combine their genes to create Human you. There may be assistance from a third person or machine, but in the end, there are two progenitors. Is your translator failing? Is mine?"

Johnny gapes for a moment. His new friend has never been that animated or strung that many words together uninterrupted in the months they had known each other. Xey had never shown much emotion, let alone exasperation. How is a father not a father? How to explain in a way xey would understand? "Um.... do hatchlings of your people get accepted into other familial flocks if they are alone? Like if their progenitors and rest of their flock die before the hatchlings can protect xemselves?"

Zix stares at Johnny, "No. What a horrible thought! A flock loss would be a catastrophe. But if so... Why would a strange flock care? That would be inefficient. More strain on a flock when there is no benefit or obligation. More Terran foolishness!"

Johnny shakes his head as he pulls out his holopad and starts drawing nine squiggles, three together under six together. "There we have it, I think. The translation error. Look at these two words, father and Dad. Look at the letters alone. Ignore the translator. It'll say they're the same but they aren't. They can both mean male progenitor. But one means MORE."

Zix just stares blankly, xir translator not helping at all, and the random squiggles meaning nothing to xem.

So Johnny continues. "Think about it like us. You were my acquaintance. A stranger I met. Then someone I knew but had no obligation to. But now you are my friend. We like each other. Help each other. Because we care about each other. If I was hurt you would help me, even though you wouldn't be obliged to. Right?"

Zix isn't sure how this has to do with progenitors, but upon thinking about it, decides xey would help all xey could. Johnny is not flock, but is more than a random being xey barely know, so xey nod.

Johnny grins, "Ok, Friendo. Well, that is the crux of it. A progenitor could be a stranger. They could conceive you then never have anything to do with you. Or at least humans can."

Zix sits aghast, for that idea computes even less. Societally and instinctively that is another impossibility for xir people. A progenitor cannot and would not do that. It would be anathema. Xey mutter, "Truly the horror of Hellworlders..."

Johnny sighs, "Pretty much. Um. My male progenitor did that. So he is my father. But he is NOT my Dad. A Dad helps you when you are hurt. They care about you. They teach you. Feed you. Believe in you. Guide you. A Dad loves you. But a Dad does not necessarily have to be your genetic progenitor. For Terran flocks, or as we call them, packs... there does not need to be genetic connection. We frequently accept the young of other flocks, and treat them as our own. I was blessed. My Dad accepted me into his pack. Fought tooth and claw to make me feel loved. Raised me. Kept me from self-destructing. That is how General LeVar Rogers is my Dad but not my father. If I'm ever half the person he is, I will be blessed indeed."